



MINIDOKA NORTH SIDE

N E W S B R I E F

Newsbrief #1

February 2002

BUREAU OF
RECLAMATION

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Begins Resource Management Plan for Minidoka North Side Area

What is the Purpose of the RMP?

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR, or Reclamation) has just started to prepare a Resource Management Plan (RMP, or the Plan) for the Minidoka North Side area, located about 40 miles east of Twin Falls. The RMP preparation process will take approximately 2 ½ years; this amount of time is needed so that all stakeholders, including the general public, have ample opportunity to express their interests, concerns, and viewpoints, and to comment on the Plan as it develops. Management of the Minidoka North Side area and its resources affects all of you in different ways, and it is therefore essential to incorporate stakeholder input into Plan development.

The RMP will be Reclamation's blueprint for the future use, management, and site development of Reclamation's Project lands

over the next ten years. The RMP will identify goals and objectives for resource management, specify desired land and resource use patterns, and explain the policies and actions that will be implemented during the 10-year life of the Plan to achieve those goals and objectives.

In preparing the Plan, Reclamation will explore a range of possible alternative management approaches, and identify a proposed plan as the intended course of action. In addition, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that Reclamation examine the potential environmental effects of implementing the actions identified in the RMP. A separate document called an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared to analyze potential environmental impacts.

The Minidoka North Side RMP Study Area

The Minidoka North Side RMP study area is located in parts of Minidoka, Cassia, and Jerome counties, Idaho. The study area includes Minidoka Dam and about 120 scattered land parcels, covering approximately 16,000 acres. The Minidoka Project was designed primarily to provide irrigation to the new communities of Heyburn, Paul, Acequia, and Rupert. The approximately 16,000 acres of withdrawn and acquired Reclamation lands in the RMP study

area are remaining from the Minidoka Project that were never developed for irrigation.

Minidoka Dam was Reclamation's first service project in Idaho, with construction completed in 1909. The United States

PUBLIC MEETING/ WORKSHOP

Details on page 8

The Minidoka North Side RMP Study Area (continued)

Congress authorized the project to include irrigation and power generation. The dam itself was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Minidoka Dam impounds Lake Walcott, one of five reservoirs associated within the larger Minidoka Project on the Snake River. Lake Walcott State Park is located on Reclamation property adjacent to the lake. Reclamation is coordinating its RMP closely with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR), its managing partner, for future planning related to the park

lands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) manages the reservoir water surface and lands on the adjacent Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge. Unlike Lake Walcott State Park, the Refuge is considered outside the RMP study area. President Teddy Roosevelt designated this 25,000-acre area a National Wildlife Refuge in 1909. Other lands in the vicinity are owned or managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), A&B Irrigation District, Minidoka Irrigation District, and private individuals and entities and are used primarily for agriculture.

The RMP Planning Team

Preparing the RMP will involve an interdisciplinary Planning Team of outdoor recreation planners, natural resource specialists, biologists, landscape architects, and engineers. Reclamation will oversee the RMP process and has contracted with EDAW, Inc., a long-established land planning firm with previous experience preparing

RMPs, as well as experience in eastern Idaho. EDAW will be assisted by: (1) CH2M Hill, an engineering and planning firm with an office in Boise; and (2) John Petrovsky Associates, also in Boise, who brings prior experience and has designed and conducted a number of public involvement programs for similar projects.

Key Issues Identified to Date

Based on current conditions and concerns at the Project, Reclamation has identified several issues that need to be addressed by the RMP. Listed below are several of the key concerns identified to date. Dialog with stakeholders will no doubt reveal more issues. The attached Mail-In Response Form provides space for you to comment on or add to this list. It also requests your views regarding the priority of these items.

- Clarification of agency responsibilities (Reclamation, FWS, BLM, Idaho Department of Fish and Game [IDFG], etc.)
- Law enforcement and multiple jurisdiction authority/coordination
- Conflicts between safety, security, and fishing access below the dam

- Need for an accessible fishing area in river area below dam
- Agricultural and grazing leases
- Trespasses and illegal water use - grazing, agricultural, off-road vehicle use, houses, sprinklers, landscaping
- Illegal dumping
- Protection of cultural and historic resources, including the Oregon Trail
- Protection of natural resources, including wetlands
- Recreation uses, including hunting, shooting, birdwatching, camping, trail use, disk golf, fishing below dam
- Site-specific concerns, including preservation of the record cottonwood tree, access to Bishop's Hole, and management of lands previously managed and leased by IDFG

**Key Issues
Identified to Date
(continued)**

- Municipal & industrial uses in the vicinity
 - Boundary signage and/or fencing
 - Property exchanges and disposal
 - Fire hazard/fuel management of lands
 - Noxious weed and grasshopper control
 - Oil spill staging areas on the river
-

**Public
Involvement
Program**

To integrate the broad spectrum of public interests involved in planning for the RMP, Reclamation is organizing an extensive public involvement program. The goal of public involvement is to reach as many of you as possible and to encourage active participation by all interested stakeholders. Public opinions are very important in this process, and your input is needed to assist Reclamation in making meaningful decisions and building informed consent on a proposed plan. To achieve this goal, Reclamation has designed a public involvement program that includes:

- Newsbriefs like this one;
- Public meetings/workshops;
- An Ad Hoc Work Group (stakeholder group); and
- A project website, available later in the study schedule.

Newsbriefs - Reclamation will prepare six Newsbriefs during the project, with this being the first. The purpose of this first Newsbrief

is to introduce the project, explain the public involvement program, and identify the initial list of issues. Initial input by return mail is also requested in the enclosed Mail-in Response Form. Future Newsbriefs will summarize results of the resource inventory studies and analyses; identify and summarize the full range of issues that the RMP will address; describe the goals, objectives, and criteria to be used in developing alternatives; illustrate and describe the alternative courses of action considered in the RMP; and present the substance of and rationale behind the proposed plan and other components of the RMP.

Public Meetings/Workshops - Reclamation will host three public meetings/workshops over the course of the project, with meetings held in Burley, Idaho. All of the meetings are intended to obtain public input into the planning process and, as the studies proceed, to share the results. The first meeting is scheduled for March 6. For more information on the meeting time and location, see the last page of this Newsbrief. The goals of the first meeting are to: (1) introduce the RMP process, (2) identify issues to be addressed by the RMP, (3) obtain public input regarding Ad Hoc Workgroup representation, and (4) obtain scoping input for the Environmental Assessment being prepared on the RMP.

The second public meeting/workshop (tentatively scheduled for December 2002) will focus on describing and obtaining commentary on the range of alternative plans presented in the RMP. The third and final public meeting/workshop (tentatively



Irrigation canals and wasteways are common features in the area.

**Public
Involvement
Program
(continued)**

scheduled for October 2003) will focus on the proposed plan and preliminary recommendations. Comments received at the last meeting will be used to finalize the RMP. More information about future meetings will be included in future issues of the Newsbriefs.

Ad Hoc Work Group - Reclamation is inviting the participation of representative stakeholders by organizing an Ad Hoc Work Group for the project. This Work Group will include representatives from key interest groups, jurisdictions, and agencies with a significant interest in the future management and use of the Project lands. The Work Group will work interactively with Reclamation's Planning Team over the course of the project, assisting in defining issues, developing goals and objectives, discussing policy and plan options, and assessing alternative plans. The Work Group will also contribute to Reclamation's decisions related to the final proposed plan.

The Work Group is being formed in early 2002. Reclamation hopes to hold the first Work Group meeting in April, with about six more meetings scheduled over the course of the RMP effort. A preliminary list of potential Work Group members is provided below.

- IDFG
- IDPR
- BLM
- FWS
- National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Irrigation Districts (A & B, Minidoka)
- City of Rupert
- Pheasants Forever
- Interested Tribes
- Adjacent landowner representative(s)

- Mid Snake Resource Conservation and Development Council
- Minidoka, Cassia, and Jerome counties
- County Sheriffs
- Minidoka Historical Society
- Local business representative
- Audubon Society

If you would like to provide input regarding the range of interests that should be included in the Work Group or have a specific suggestion regarding interest groups or individuals, the attached Mail-In Response Form provides a method for you to provide such input.

Website* - To increase public access to information about the Minidoka North Side RMP, Reclamation is designing a project website, accessible via the Internet. Electronic mail (e-mail) and the World Wide Web (WWW) are preferred methods of communication for many public agencies, interest groups, businesses, and a growing percentage of the general public. Information posted on the websites will include meeting announcements, project information, and feedback mechanisms to receive public input (such as an electronic version of the response form contained in this Newsbrief).

****Note:*** *due to current government and court decisions regarding network security, Reclamation's website is currently not accessible; it is expected that internet access will resume in the near future. When the website is accessible, the address will be: www.pn.usbr.gov*

(text continued on page 7)

Mail-In Response Form

If you do not plan on attending the first public meeting, or would like to respond to us in writing, please consider answering the questions below and submitting this page of the Newsbrief. We appreciate your participation and look forward to hearing from you.

1. Do you: *(Please check all boxes that apply)*

- ☐ Reside in Jerome County
- ☐ Reside in Minidoka County
- ☐ Reside in Cassia County
- ☐ Reside in Blaine County
- ☐ Reside elsewhere but within a 1-hour drive of any of the study area lands
- ☐ Reside more than a 1-hour drive from the study area lands

2. What is your zip code? _____

3. If you recreate in the area, please tell us where and what activities you participate in.

4. If you have a specific interest in one or more of the RMP study area parcels, please tell us what it/they is/are and circle the parcel(s) of interest on the map.

5. Using the preliminary list of issues shown on pages 2 and 3 of this Newsbrief as a guide, please list the issues that are of the greatest concern to you and number them in order of importance (1 being most important). If there are other issues not listed that you feel are important, please also include them below.

6. Do you plan to attend the public meeting on March 6, 2002?

☐ yes ☐ no

7. Do you want to remain on the mailing list to receive subsequent Newsbriefs for this project? (Please provide and/or confirm your name and address)

☐ yes ☐ no

8. Is there anyone else you know who would like to be on the mailing list? Please add their names and addresses.

9. Is there another agency, specific organization, or group of individuals you feel should be represented on the Ad Hoc Work Group described on pages 3 and 4 of the Newsbrief?

Question responses and letters should be mailed to Carolyn Burpee Stone, Reclamation's project manager, at the address shown below. This page should be folded in thirds and taped closed. Be sure Reclamation's address is on the outside.

Thank you for your time and interest!

Please Return by February 25, 2002

Please fold, tape closed, and affix first class stamp







U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
PN Regional Office
Attn: Carolyn Burpee Stone PN 3902
1150 North Curtis Road, Suite 100
Boise, ID 83706-1234



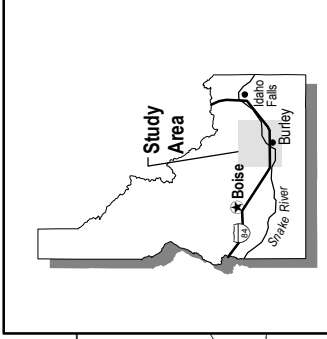
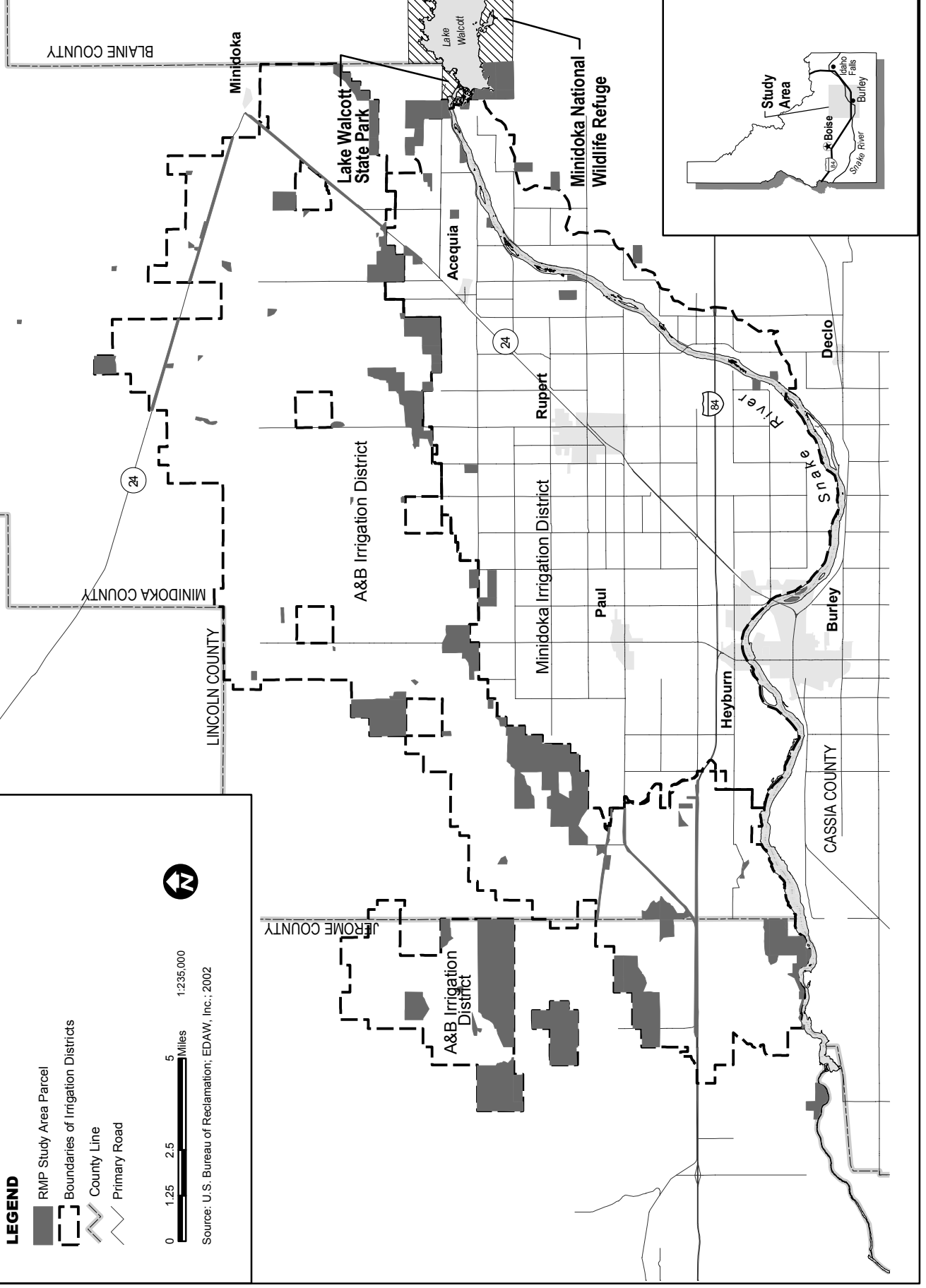
Minidoka North Side RMP

LEGEND

-  RMP Study Area Parcel
-  Boundaries of Irrigation Districts
-  County Line
-  Primary Road



Source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation; ED&AW, Inc.; 2002



The Project Schedule

As shown in the diagram below, the first stage of the process is to identify key issues to be addressed by the RMP. Future phases of the process include a resource inventory and evaluation; resource-specific analyses; formulation of goals and objectives; development of plans, policies, and guidelines; and preparation of draft and final documents for public and agency review.

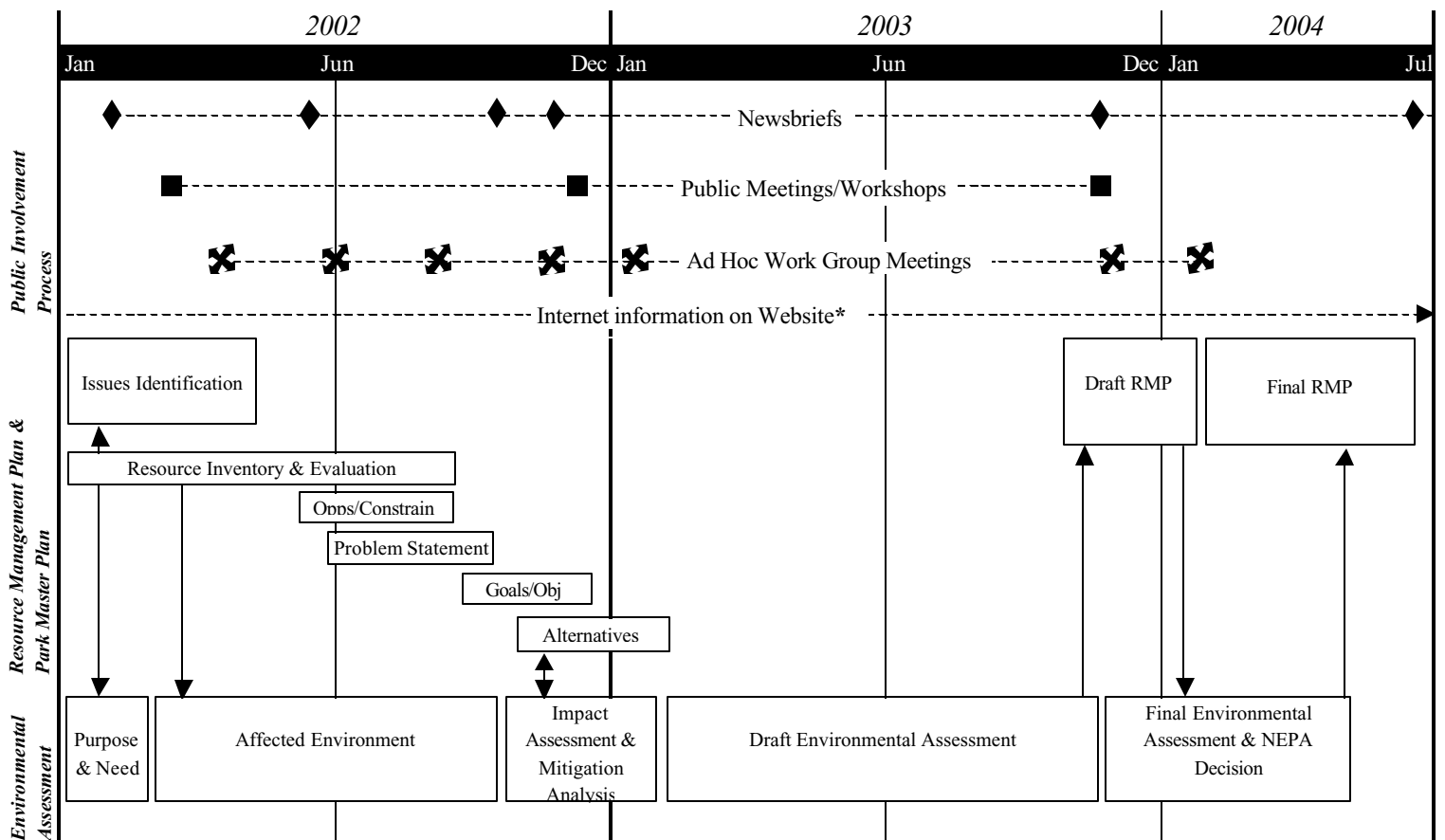
Beginning in the fall of 2002, the planning effort will turn to assessing alternative management approaches, developing policies aimed at addressing identified issues, and

achieving the goals and objectives of the plan. Ultimately, a proposed plan will evolve from the efforts of the Planning Team and from input by the Ad Hoc Work Group and the general public through the public involvement program. The final RMP is targeted for completion by July 2004.



Wetland enhancement efforts have created additional wildlife habitat in the area.

Schedule and Workplan



You are Invited:

to the First Public Meeting & Workshop on the Minidoka North Side Resource Management Plan

To “kick off” the project, introduce the RMP, and to get your input, Reclamation is holding the first in a series of public meetings & workshops:

DATE: March 6, 2002
PLACE: Burley Inn, 800 N. Overland Avenue
Burley, ID
TIME: 7:00 - 9:00 pm

This location was selected in part because of the facilities’ accessibility to people with disabilities, as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Interested persons needing special assistance in this regard should contact Pam Brown, Accessibility Coordinator at (208) 678-0461 ext. 32 at least one week before the scheduled meeting so that arrangements can be made. TTYTDD # 1-800-833-6388.



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